CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 25 June 1996, at 10 a.m.

President Mr. Urrutia (Peru)

GE.96-62492 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I declare open the 741st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have great pleasure, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, in extending a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas, who will address the Conference today. I believe His Excellency needs no further presentation. Before his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country in March 1988, he represented his Government in various positions, in particular as Permanent Representative to the United Nations, both in Geneva and in New York. Likewise, he has had a very eminent role in the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement and occupied the post of co-President of the Conference on Cambodia in Paris. His participation in forums on multilateral disarmament is well known to all of us. I should also say that he was Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts to Carry Out a Comprehensive Study on the Naval Arms Race, Naval Forces and Naval Arms Systems that was set up by the United Nations Secretary-General. He was also elected Chairman of the First Committee during the fortieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and served as President of the Amendment Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water. We are greatly indebted to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia for having found time in his heavy schedule to come and address the Conference, especially at this significant time when our efforts are being directed towards concluding the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. We are convinced, Mr. Minister, that your experience and wisdom will be of benefit to us all.

On my list of speakers for today I also have the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan. However, before giving the floor to His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, I would like to make a few remarks on taking up the presidency of the Conference for the next few weeks.

I would like to say that it is an honour for me to take the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament at a time when this body is at a very critical stage in its history. The negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty have entered the final stretch. We are aware that it is difficult, with regard to the substance, to achieve agreement on a treaty of this nature. Nevertheless, in our view, we believe that the differences can be overcome if the necessary political will exists for this and if flexibility and understanding is shown for the various interests of each of our countries. The Conference, as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, should spare no effort in the search for agreed solutions in order to conclude this treaty in the time allotted by the international community, a community that is watching us and expects this body to produce concrete results, results which respond to its real aspirations, that is to say, a universal treaty totally banning nuclear tests that is effectively verifiable and contributes to disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. In this context, I would like to express to Ambassador Ramaker, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, and his colleagues my heartfelt thanks for the invaluable efforts that they have made in order to bring about a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, and as President of the Conference I wish to offer him my support and cooperation.

(The President)

Allow me also to extend a warm welcome to the 23 countries that have become members of the Conference. I am sure that their participation as full members will doubtless help to enhance the performance and effectiveness of our Conference in its work.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my predecessor, the distinguished Ambassador of Pakistan, Munir Akram for the outstanding way in which he led the work of the Conference as well as for the tireless efforts he made to ensure that the expansion of the membership of this body materialized. Likewise, my thanks go to Ambassadors Aye of Myanmar, Ramaker of the Netherlands and Abuah of Nigeria for their remarkable contributions over the last few months.

As you all know, and as was stated by Ambassador Akram in his closing remarks last Thursday, there are still some pending issues of great importance for the future work of the Conference, on which I intend to continue the consultations that my predecessors started. These concern the consideration of our future agenda and programme of work once the negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty (CTBT) have been completed, as well as the subject of nuclear disarmament. The report submitted by the distinguished Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria, in his capacity as Special Coordinator for the agenda, will be very useful for continuing the consultations both on this subject and on the subject of nuclear disarmament, on which, despite the efforts made by my predecessors, no agreement has yet been reached. With the support of you all and the secretariat I hope to be able to carry out the tasks facing me during my term of office.

I now have pleasure in giving the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mr. ALATAS (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to offer you my congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of this session of the Conference on Disarmament. It is altogether fitting that a seasoned diplomat such as yourself should bear the momentous responsibility of guiding the Conference toward completing its negotiations on the comprehensive test-ban treaty and to prepare the ground for its agenda in the future. I thank you for the very kind words you have directed to me. I should like to seize this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Akram of Pakistan, for the excellent manner in which he guided the deliberations of this Conference during the previous session.

I also wish to applaud wholeheartedly the long-overdue decision taken by the Conference to expand its membership and extend a warm welcome to the new members in our midst. I am confident that their contributions will add substantively to the success of this Conference. As you may recall, Indonesia was among those that supported from the very beginning the admittance to this august body of the 23 countries listed in Ambassador O'Sullivans's list. While respecting the sovereign right of each State to commit itself to any legal obligation, we do not believe it appropriate, however, that the expansion of membership of the Conference be linked to any condition. This decision should not therefore constitute a precedent. Moreover, we firmly

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believe that the question of expansion of membership of the Conference should continue to be under active consideration in order to allow all aspiring States to join this multilateral negotiating body.

Since the demise of the cold war era, we have been confronted with massive and profound changes that have generated challenges and contradictory trends in international relations. But, at the same time, they have also opened new vistas and engendered a deepening sense of interdependence that has prompted nations to devise more realistic and mutually beneficial patterns of cooperation. Thus a window of opportunity was opened for the major nuclear-weapons States to conclude and implement a series of important nuclear arms reduction agreements. This same sense of interdependence has also brought about a favourable ambience for this Conference to conclude the first multilaterally negotiated convention comprehensively banning chemical weapons. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Conference that Indonesia is at the final stage in the process of ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention.

These developments have indeed boosted our hopes for a more peaceful and secure world. Yet we must keep a watchful eye on the dark side of the picture. The international scene is still beset by unresolved tensions and violent conflict, by resort to armed force and military intervention, by deeply rooted inequities and imbalances in inter-State relations. Nuclear arsenals of immense destructive power continue to cast their dark shadow across the globe while new forms of inter-State and intra-State conflict have emerged in many regions and on an unprecedented scale. The issues of peace and security have thus become ever more intricate. Failure to effectively address any of these complex issues could gravely endanger human society and the Earth's finite resources, thereby jeopardizing humanity's quest to live securely in peace, free from aggression, domination and external interference.

One of the great challenges of our time therefore is how to devise a more effective system of global governance to manage the massive changes that have created and continue to create a multitude of challenges and problems affecting our common security. It is in this context that collective endeavours based on the principles and objectives enshrined in the United Nations Charter should be pursued relentlessly by all members of the global community. And this Conference must fully assume its mandated role to negotiate measures in the field of disarmament that will help ensure and maintain international peace and security.

We must sustain our endeavours to achieve that vital goal we set for ourselves some 32 years ago: the banning of all nuclear tests by all States, in all environments, for all time. Indonesia, like the overwhelming majority of the international community, has long been convinced that an early end to nuclear testing would be an essential step toward preventing the qualitative improvement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new ones, and contribute greatly to horizontal as well as vertical non-proliferation. Indeed, we fully agree with the view that a CTBT constitutes the litmus test for the willingness of States to halt the nuclear arms race and to pursue nuclear disarmament.

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For more than three decades we have gone through frustrating and sterile controversy in the negotiations to establish a comprehensive test-ban treaty. But finally we have reached a stage where a collective understanding has emerged that we should conclude by this year a treaty that would translate that goal into a reality. The creation of such an instrument would constitute a breakthrough in our pursuit of the objective of nuclear disarmament set forth in the existing Non-Proliferation Treaty by all States parties. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons has confirmed that systematic and progressive efforts should be resolutely exerted to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eventually eliminating those weapons and achieving general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Furthermore, the fiftieth United Nations General Assembly has set a time-frame within which the Conference should finalize the text of the treaty: namely, as soon as possible within 1996 so that it could be signed during the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly session. That means that we are now racing against time and we are all called upon to summon the requisite resolve and to exercise the necessary flexibility on issues of critical importance to the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

Allow me now to address some of the key issues pending in the negotiations. I should like to start by expressing my high appreciation to Ambassador Jaap Ramaker of the Netherlands, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, who has taken a timely and courageous initiative by tabling a clean draft of the comprehensive test-ban treaty. Taking into account the fact that the Conference is now entering the final stage of the negotiations, I should like to focus on those provisions which are bound to affect the vital interests of all of us.

One of the fundamental considerations in our deliberations should be the objectives that the States parties hope to achieve through the treaty. We therefore have to resolve the question of whether the treaty will merely serve the goal of curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons or whether it will also serve as the basis for a determined pursuit of the ultimate goal of the elimination of all nuclear weapons by all States. Before everything else, we must reach agreement on this crucial question. Indonesia submits that the preambular part of the treaty should at the least encompass two fundamental objectives: to curb any form of nuclear weapons proliferation in all its aspects, and to serve as a basis for the pursuit of the objective of eliminating all nuclear weapons.

We are therefore dismayed by the positions taken by some nuclear-weapons States which, despite their claim to being the guardians of global non-proliferation, fail to reflect a genuine non-proliferation policy in the draft basic obligations of each State party under the treaty. It would seem that the maintenance of their individual and strategic postures as well as their status as nuclear-weapons States has taken precedence over their commitment to total abstention from nuclear-weapons tests. It should be made clear that our efforts are not directed at undermining the security policies of a few nuclear or potentially nuclear States, but rather at achieving security for all. If we must eventually achieve the elimination of nuclear

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weapons, it is imperative that we should come to an agreement that the treaty ban all nuclear weapons test explosions and any other kind of nuclear explosion in order to cap totally the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. This is a position that the ASEAN countries staunchly upheld when they recently concluded the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. In this context, while deploring the continued testing of nuclear weapons by one nuclear-weapon State, I also take note of the flexibility that is being shown by that country on the question of peaceful nuclear explosions. However, I wish to reiterate the opposition of my Government to allowing peaceful nuclear explosions under the treaty, since it is our belief that permitting such nuclear explosions will run counter to the spirit and letter of the basic obligations of the treaty. We are however open-minded on the possibility for every State party to put forward any proposal within the context of the review conference as long as it is within the ambit of the treaty.

On the question of the composition of the Executive Council, we are convinced that the election of its membership should be guided by two principles: first, the principle of equitable geographical distribution and, second, the equal right of every State party to serve as a member of the Executive Council. The membership of this executive organ should also reflet the new political and economic realities of the post-cold-war era. Thus, in our view, the proposal of allocating membership to the Council among the regional groups as suggested by the Chairman reflects a more realistic approach. The envisaged numerical distribution of membership among regional groups, if coupled with the principles I have just cited, will facilitate a compromise solution to the question of membership on the Council.

The idea of establishing a larger membership on the Council also warrants favourable consideration. It is absolutely necessary that the organization of the treaty be able to function in a democratic and transparent manner. This means that all States should be allowed to get involved in the decision-making process of the treaty.

Let me also share our basic views on the question of on-site inspections, another important issue that has to be urgently addressed. First, Indonesia agrees with those who hold that an on-site inspection request should be based on data gathered solely by the international monitoring system. It is therefore essential that the international monitoring network should be fully operational by the time the comprehensive test-ban treaty enters into force. In this context, Indonesia has agreed to the integration of the six auxiliary stations listed in the draft treaty with the international monitoring system, provided that all costs for upgrading and building new facilities are borne by the organization of the comprehensive test-ban treaty. Second, any request for an on-site inspection should be given the benefit of a judicious evaluation by the Executive Council in order to prevent any States parties from launching an unfounded and politically motivated on-site inspection - to which developing countries would be particularly vulnerable. Furthermore, we consider it essential that, being a multilateral legal commitment, action on a request for an on-site inspection should be taken collectively. Third, when

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the Council finds a request for an on-site inspection to be justified, it should make the necessary decision and carry it out expeditiously before time-critical evidence could be removed from the suspected testing site.

Admittedly, there are divergences of view on this issue but these should not paralyse us - this Conference has to be innovative. We are ready to accept an approach which may be able to bring about consensus. One such approach is the idea that a simple majority on the Council should be sufficient to carry a decision on a request for on-site inspection which is based on data gathered by the international monitoring system. However, if the request for an on-site inspection were based solely on information gathered through national technical means, not corroborated by IMS data, a two-thirds majority would be necessary for a decision. In any case, the decision should be taken and carried out as quickly as possible if the process is going to be effective.

We understand and appreciate the concern that has been expressed over possible abuse, but I believe this concern is sufficiently met by preventive measures that have been conceived to deal with possible unwarranted requests for on-site inspection. In view of the crucial need for quick response, the clarification and consultation mechanism that has been embodied in the Chairman's draft should be made non-mandatory so as not to hinder the Executive Council in executing a legitimate and factually based on-site inspection. Indeed, we believe that an on-site inspection can be conducted simultaneously with the consultation and clarification process among the parties concerned.

The question of the entry into force of the treaty has become one of the major stumbling-blocks in the negotiations. As you may recall, Indonesia has advocated a simple numerical approach, allowing the comprehensive test-ban treaty to enter into force once an agreed number of countries have ratified it, as in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I am, however, fully aware of the fact that without the participation of the nuclear-weapons States and the nuclear-capable States, the comprehensive test-ban treaty would not be effective. Hence there should be a mechanism to secure the ratification of those countries. In this context, we are open-minded to the suggestion that a mechanism be devised outside the framework of the treaty but linked to it in order to prevent the possibility of the entry into force of the treaty from being taken hostage by a small number of States. Towards this end, the participating nuclear States may adopt a solemn declaration not to engage in the further, qualitative improvement of their nuclear weapons. This may help to ensure that ratification by all States, including those that I have referred to, could be obtained.

Let me conclude with an appeal to all participating States in this Conference on Disarmament to spare no effort to complete the negotiations within the time-frame we have agreed upon. In doing so, we need tc focus on our shared interests so that we may be able to resolve our divergences. Let us not allow these divergences to be used by any party as an excuse to prevent or delay agreement on the treaty. Let us not squander this precious opportunity to accomplish a task so vital and crucial to the common security of humankind. For I believe that this treaty is an absolute precondition to

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any workable structure of international peace and stability. As such, it forms the basis of our hope that the next century will not repeat the savagery of the one we are leaving behind, and that the anticipated prosperity of the next few decades will not be marred by the terror wrought by weapons of mass destruction. This is a hope that we all share. But we can realize it only if, by our willingness to compromise, we prove equal to the challenge that is linked to it.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Pakistan, Ambassador Akram.

Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. We are fortunate that the stewardship of the Conference, at one of the most crucial moments in its history, is in the hands of an able and skilled diplomat from a major non-aligned country of Latin America. It is our hope that our negotiations for a test-ban treaty will be crowned with success under your wise and able leadership. I will, of course, refrain from commenting on the performance of your predecessor.

It is also a great pleasure for my country, and for me personally, to welcome in our midst the distinguished Foreign Minister of Indonesia, His Excellency, Mr. Ali Alatas. His contributions to international peace and security, including to regional and global disarmament and development, are too numerous to enumerate. His important statement to us today will constitute a significant contribution to both our present as well as our future negotiations.

For over 35 years, Pakistan has supported the objective of concluding a CTBT. Two and a half years ago we warmly welcomed the commencement of these negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Today, we are close to concluding the text of a treaty. Unfortunately, it is not the CTBT we had sought for so long.

What we have before us is a treaty text which would ban nuclear explosion tests and not all nuclear tests. We understand that this limitation is because subcritical and laboratory tests are not verifiable. But what we find unfortunate is that the nuclear-weapon States are not prepared to agree that such tests should not be used to enable them to continue to improve their nuclear weapons in the guise of so-called "safety and reliability" tests. Moreover, since both "zero-yield" tests and "low-yield" explosion tests - so-called hydronuclear tests - are, as yet, non-verifiable, the advanced nuclear-weapon States could conceivably continue to violate the prohibition contained in the proposed treaty. In the circumstances, the treaty we are negotiating is unlikely to fully achieve the objective of halting the qualitative development of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, the frustration of the non-nuclear-weapon States is further heightened by the fact that the major nuclear Powers are not prepared, under

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the treaty, to provide any commitment to halting the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, promoting nuclear disarmament and eventually eliminating all nuclear weapons, with or without a "time-bound framework".

Thirdly, the international verification system to be established under the treaty has been, deliberately, restricted in its capacity and operations. The compromises reached in the IMS and IDC texts could unravel in the preparatory phase if the technically advanced countries seek to limit the products and services of the IDC.

Fourthly, while limiting the capabilities of the IMS, inordinate emphasis has been placed on the use of on-site inspections, which should, in principle, be an extremely rare and exceptional occurrence. Our fears that OSIs could be used for harassment and interference are heightened by the demands made for an easy "trigger" for such OSIs.

Finally, the use of so-called national technical means in triggering such OSIs is bound to render the verification of this treaty even more unequal against the technologically less advanced countries and open to discrimination and abuse by the few States which possess such NTMs.

Furthermore, my delegation is extremely unhappy at the manner in which our negotiations have proceeded over the past critical month. While texts have descended one after another "from heaven and elsewhere", the full membership of the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to participate in genuine negotiations. Indeed, most members of the Conference have become spectators to a drama played out among the five nuclear Powers - in which the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee has had a minor role.

We have closely considered our response to the situation I have described. It would be easy for us to say that we give up on these negotiations. Pakistan has not done so for at least two good reasons. One: we feel that a ban on nuclear explosions is better than no ban at all. It will severely constrain the ability of the nuclear Powers to further improve their nuclear weapons. It will also prevent the development of a number of exotic new weapons and nuclear-weapons systems.

Two: a ban on nuclear explosions will contribute significantly to nuclear non-proliferation. While we decry the imbalance between the treaty's effect on vertical and horizontal proliferation, for Pakistan, halting the further proliferation of nuclear weapons capabilities in South Asia is an important objective. A test-ban treaty accepted by both Pakistan and India will fulfil the objective of the bilateral test-ban treaty which we had formally proposed to India in June 1987.

Therefore, Pakistan is extremely disturbed by the declaration made here on 20 June by our neighbour announcing the decision not to sign the CTBT which we are about to conclude unless all its conditions are met. If this decision is not reversed, it could spell the death-knell of the treaty.

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This is no exaggeration. The treaty we are negotiating is not a general measure of non-proliferation or nuclear disarmament. It is a specific treaty, with a specific "basic obligation" - that is, not to conduct nuclear explosions. Therefore, to be effective and "comprehensive", this treaty must foreclose the possibility of nuclear explosions being conducted by all the States which have the technical and the legal capability to conduct such tests. There are eight such States - the five nuclear Powers and the three so-called "threshold" States. To those who live in the "real world", it is clear that if one of these States is out of the treaty, all of them will be out. Those who express fears about a "hostage" situation, those who sincerely desire an early "entry into force", with or without these eight States, ignore fundamental strategic and political realities.

The unilateral and, in our view, premature declaration by one of these eight States that it will not sign the CTBT in no way changes these fundamental realities. This is no reason to begin to look for waiver conferences and special meetings to circumvent the requirement for ratification by all the nuclear-capable States. To do so is to shift the political responsibility for holding up the treaty from those who do not accept it to those who are prepared to accept it. To do so is to contemplate the possibility of a treaty coming into force whose parties do not include several or even one of the eight nuclear-capable States. Such a treaty would be a farce. It would be "dead on arrival".

It is precisely to escape such political responsibility that the declaration of 20 June has opposed the formula for entry into force contained in the Chairman's working paper CD/NTB/WP.330, providing for essential ratification by 37 States hosting the IMS seismic stations and laboratories. This formula will apply to all 37 States. It does not force or oblige any one of them to act contrary to their sovereign rights.

While the declaration of 20 June has cast a long shadow over the CTBT, it has also raised the nuclear spectre in South Asia. Pakistan is concerned that this precipitate denunciation of the test-ban treaty may imply the possibility of the conduct of further nuclear tests. This is a possibility about which we cannot remain sanguine. Nor can those who desire an early and effective CTBT ignore this threat.

At this critical moment, when we are poised between success and failure, Pakistan asks the Conference on Disarmament to pause and consider the possible ways and means to respond to the challenge to the CTBT posed by the prior denunciation by one nuclear-capable State.

In our view, we have the possibility to try and reverse this negative decision through some constructive compromises in our negotiations. We must at least make the effort, if only to test the sincerity of the stand taken by this State on the proposed treaty. In a statement made in the CD on 23 May 1996, Pakistan had proposed that to "provide ... reassurance regarding the scope of the CTBT", a separate section could be added to the preamble of the treaty spelling out its "purposes and objectives" - including prevention of the qualitative development of nuclear weapons and new kinds of nuclear weapons; promoting nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament

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and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame. If linked to a periodic review of the treaty, this provision could represent a specific legal commitment to nuclear disarmament.

It is unfortunate that there was no serious response from either side to this compromise approach. Despite our self-imposed race against the clock, we would urge that, even at this eleventh hour, consideration be given to resolving the shortcomings of the treaty's scope and responding to the aspirations for nuclear disarmament through the mechanism which we have proposed.

Similarly, genuine negotiations are needed to resolve some of the principal problems that remain outstanding, particularly as regards the verification regime of the CTBT. In this context, Pakistan has several specific difficulties. I will mention only our major concerns.

First, we will continue to resist any procedure which implies an easy decision to trigger an on-site inspection. A decision taken by a two-thirds majority is the minimum safeguard we need.

Second, the use of the NTMs cannot be allowed without severe constraints or conditions. An OSI should not be conducted only on the basis of information gained through NTMs. And Pakistan will insist that the use of "espionage and human intelligence" and other unacceptable practices must be excluded from such NTMs.

Third, we continue to be extremely concerned that an OSI could be used for the purposes of intrusion into buildings and facilities unrelated to the treaty's objectives but sensitive for national security. The inspected State must have the right to deny access to such facilities.

Fourth, we have difficulties in endorsing the listing of States in various regions contained in the annex to the draft treaty text. These can be finalized only after full discussion and negotiation among the States of each region.

Fifth, we do not believe that the United Nations Security Council should have a role in the enforcement of compliance with this treaty, specially since five States, which are among those most likely to conduct tests, possess the unequal right to veto any decision in the Security Council.

The Pakistan delegation is prepared to work around the clock in the next few days to conclude our negotiations by 28 June. But even more important that this deadline is the need to ensure that the treaty which emerges is the outcome of genuine negotiations and thus acceptable to the general membership of the Conference on Disarmament. Only then can we entertain the hope that a CTBT will have universal adherence and come into force as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his statement and the kind words addressed to myself. I give the floor to the representative of Cameroon, Ambassador Ngoubeyou.

Mr. NGOUBEYOU (Cameroon) (translated from French): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on taking the Chair of the Conference on Disarmament at the moment when my country is becoming a member. Having had the occasion and privilege to work under your guidance in other forums, particularly in the framework of the Commission on Human Rights, I can bear witness here to the fact that under your authority the Conference on Disarmament is in good hands. I would also like to extend my congratulations to your predecessor, Ambassador Munir Akram of Pakistan, who among other things had the merit and the honour of presiding over the historic meeting which formalized the admission of the recent new members of the Conference on Disarmament to this great club. You now know, Ambassador Akram, that you have been very useful and presided over a meeting which will remain graven in the annals of the Conference.

Allow me also to also convey respectful greetings to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, and to thank him for his important statement that he made this morning.

I asked for the floor not to make a long technical statement but just to express my country's gratitude to all those who supported our candidature and promoted our accession to the status of member of the Conference. As I take the floor for the first time as a full member of the Conference, allow me therefore to add my voice to so many others who preceded me in welcoming the historic decision taken by this august assembly on Monday, 17 June 1996 on the matter of the expansion of the Conference by the admission of 23 new members en bloc. We would like to express our gratitude to yourself and to all your predecessors, particularly their Excellencies Ambassadors Paul O'Sullivan of Australia, Mounir Zahran of Egypt, Nacer Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco and Munir Akram of Pakistan, for the enormous amount of work that you have done with them to achieve this positive result. Our thanks and appreciation also go to all the members of the Conference who have worked intensively to reconcile the various national views and concerns with the more universal views and concerns of the international community, with the objective of completing the first stage, the expansion of the Conference.

We value this decision all the more since we are aware of its cost, in terms not only of recommendations, proposals, non-papers and resolutions which were ultimately dropped, but also and above all in terms of ups and downs, contacts, concessions, reversals and patience. Some of the new members of the Conference had to wait stubbornly and remain faithful to the cause of disarmament for more than a decade in order to become members today of this elitist body. In such difficulties lies the essence of international diplomacy, that which makes it possible to reconcile positions which on the face of it are irreconcilable. In welcoming this decision, my delegation hopes that it will constitute a step forward in the right direction and that, sooner or later, every member of our family of nations will be entitled by right to have access to discussion of our common affairs.

We cannot go on forever claiming that we are in a forum for negotiating universal treaties and at the same time limit or delay the participation of certain members in these negotiations. The decision to expand the Conference could not be more timely. It comes about at the very moment when the

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conclusion of the negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty is at the centre of our attention. For my delegation the conclusion of this treaty is essential, because this would lead to the strengthening of peace and international security and to clear and effective prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all forms and would rapidly lead step by step to complete nuclear disarmament.

I cannot conclude my brief statement without congratulating and at the same time thanking all the other members of the Group of 23 who managed to maintain their solidarity and patiently overcome all the obstacles until they made their collective admission into the Conference a reality. In this respect I would like to express particular thanks to our indefatigable coordinator of the Group of 23, Ambassador Jorge Berguño of Chile, Ambassador Selebi of South Africa and their delegations for their constant efforts towards achievement of our common objective. My delegation is committed to making its own contribution in the most positive possible way to the deliberations in the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank Ambassador Ngoubeyou of Cameroon for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Miss Chehabi.

Miss CHEHABI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on your assumption of the post of President. I would like to wish you every success in your work. I wish to say that my country's delegation shares the view expressed earlier by the delegations of Pakistan and Iran concerning the annex on page 13 of document WP.335.

The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I thank the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic for its statement. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor? It seems not. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will take place on Thursday, 27 June, at 10 a.m. in room VII.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.